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Letter from Taizé

BIMONTHLY 3.50 FF

April - May 1989 / 2

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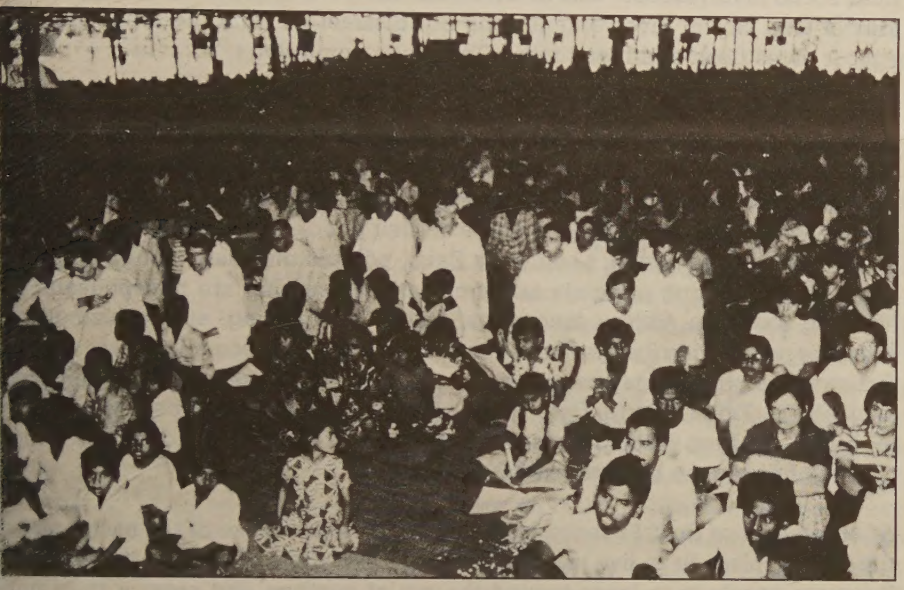
MADRAS

YOUTH FROM TWELVE STATES OF INDIA AND FROM EVERY CONTINENT : A HUGE 'PANDAL' WAS USED FOR THE COMMON PRAYER (see page 3).



Vladimir Sichov

PARIS

NEVER BEFORE HAD SO MANY PEOPLE ATTENDED A EUROPEAN MEETING, primarily because of all the young people who came from Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland. In each of the four churches in which prayers were held simultaneously, up to five different languages could be heard. These long periods of prayer around the brothers of the community, in huge churches filled to overflowing, provided the rhythm of the days and enabled each one of the 33,000 young people to undertake an inner pilgrimage with Christ. Church leaders came to participate in one of the prayers: Cardinal Lustiger, the Greek Orthodox bishop, Protestant ministers, an Armenian bishop with a message from the Catholikos of Armenia in the wake of the earthquake. In the underground, the trains and the railway stations,conversation, laughter and singing could be heard in many different languages, with a joyfulness and a serenity that the Parisians found quite moving. More than 300 parishes had organized the welcome, to a great extent in families. For these thousands of families, offering lodging to strangers who spoke unknown languages seemed a bit daunting at first. But this soon turned to astonishment, and even admiration, upon seeing how quickly friendships could be formed and deep sharing take place with a minimum of words.

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A PARABLE FOR TODAY: Here is how one journalist described the European meeting: "Young people by the thousands have invaded Paris.A peaceful invasion of the streets, the metros and the churches. A warm welcome in families, communities and parishes where the language of a smile needs no translation. The French capital is running on Taizé time. A gigantic parable is being lived out before our eyes... ▶

Hungary: Pécs

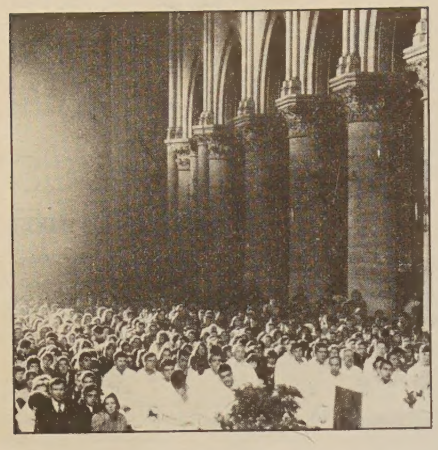
April 28 - May 1 1989

Taizé has been invited to prepare an East-West European meeting in Pécs, in the south of Hungary. Young people will be welcomed by the local Christian community and will come together for common prayer in the Churches of the town. It is the first such East-West meeting to take place in Hungary. **(see page 7)**

TAIZÉ

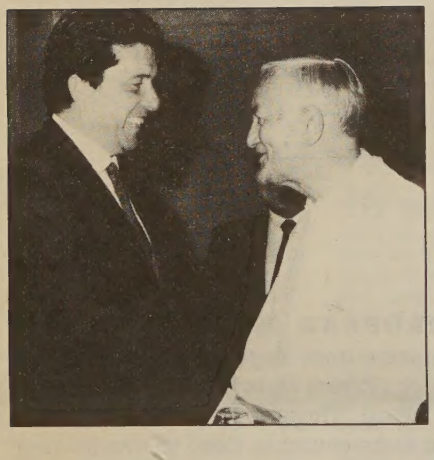
FORTY INTERCONTINENTAL MEETINGS

Beginning on February 4th, the intercontinental meetings this year will last until November 12th. Young adults from the Southern continents are more numerous than ever and stay longer in Taizé. Each week, therefore, there are people from thirty-five to sixty different nations present. Their presence is possible to the extent that the parishes of Europe contribute to pay the cost of their journey. After a time of preparation in Taizé, they go together with Europeans to visit parishes in Europe. For a long time, the Gospel came primarily from the Northern continents. These young people, who come from countries where faith is sometimes more alive, are taking part in a new evangelization of Europe, in the arrival of a springtime of the Church.
For more information and to register for the intercontinental meetings, write to: Meetings, 71250 Taizé Community, France. Tel. 85.50.18.18.



"These parables go straight to the heart and are a stimulus to action. A parable is a kind of language, of course. This one gives a content and a tone to terms like communion, reconciliation, solidarity and trust. But a parable is not only words. It also evokes, provokes, offers a vision. And as we discover that we belong to the «whole European family», how can we not feel a kind of joyous anticipation of a new world, where each person will have their place and where all peoples will exchange signs of peace? As we spend hours in prayer, singing melodies whose principal quality is their beauty, how can we not be led to the most intimate regions of our being, where a mysterious presence of love is disclosed? As we listen to others tell of the thousand and one ways in which reconciliation is turned into a reality, how can we not realize we are invited to come out of our shell or leave our slippers behind and move to the front ranks of the builders of humanity? If the parable of Taizé-on-the-Seine is so effective, that is because it always attempts to bring together inner life and human solidarities.The inner pilgrimage does not take us away from social involvement: this involvement finds roots and new energy in the love of God. Social involvement does not distract us from the inner pilgrimage: it gives flesh and blood to a «Christ of communion»."

AN EARTH WHERE ALL CAN LIVE : The meeting at UNESCO, with the Director General Federico Mayor, was transmitted live to the four churches; only 2000 young people from every land could fit in the largest auditorium there. At the beginning, three young people spoke; they asked, in the name of their people, for changes to make the earth a place fit to live in. Leon, from Zaire, pointed out that to build a lasting peace, a fair sharing of goods and a climate of listening are indispensable, a listening that, "in African languages, means also feeling, sympathizing and even obeying." Then Sandra, from Brazil, speaking of her commitment in a small factory, asked questions about social structures that cause unemployment and inequalities. Finally Pierre, from Haiti, described the forgotten people who live in slums, who bear within themselves a treasure of humanity and who are longing for a fine human hope to rise for them.



After a response from Federico Mayor, Brother Roger spoke of the call to make the earth a place fit to live in. "It depends in part upon the young if the whole European family is to leave behind the era of mistrust and enter a third millenium when it will be possible to build in trust and friendship with all... Your generation can be the one to make it possible for every person to have a home fit to live in...". Then Federico Mayor proposed that "an agreement be concluded between you, the young from different parts of the world, and UNESCO to make the earth a place fit to live in." He concluded: "I commit myself from now on to support you. Your role is irreplaceable, you know. Nothing will happen without your commitment. We must choose between effort and resignation, between sharing and egoism. The fate of every great human enterprise has always, in the end, been sealed by such choices."

The meeting at UNESCO reflects well the importance given to human solidarities during the meeting. Each morning, in the parishes, participants met with people involved in very concrete local commitments: tutoring, visiting prisoners, working in food co-operatives, helping the unemployed, etc.

GOING FORWARD ON THE ROAD OF GIVING ONE'S LIFE : To emphasize another aspect of this solidarity, the beginning of the new year was preceded by a prayer vigil for peace. In each parish, this vigil brought together people from the neighbourhood who also took part in the celebration afterwards, during which young adults from every nation contributed a song or a dance. On the afternoon of January 1st, after the meal which almost everyone took in the families, young people from other continents gave their witness in sixteen different places in Paris and its suburbs. On the afternoon of January 2nd, committed people in the region animated the workshops on the theme of solidarity with the outcasts of society.

Vladimir Sichov

One afternoon, the theme of one of the workshops was: "Giving your life on account of Christ and the Gospel." Many chose it because it is one of the main themes of the Letter from Russia, but also because there is a great desire to take this risk in one's daily life. The last afternoon provided an opportunity for people to reflect on how to continue when they return home after the meeting. It was a time for thinking about ways to share with others what each had received, taking into account the great diversity of situations. For many, the intensity of the common prayer will remain a strong encouragement to keep on daring to pray even when routine and the many cares of daily life intervene. The impetus given to continue the pilgrimage of trust on earth will make possible a great many steps in each person's own situation. Many people, too, wanted to respond to the invitation of the young Hungarians to come to Pécs. And, throughout the year, the intercontinental meetings in Taizé will be a way of deepening and going further with each one's own searching, in particular by reflecting on the Letter from Russia. ■

MADRAS

TEN THOUSAND YOUNG ADULTS FROM TWELVE STATES OF INDIA, together with young people from all the continents, took part from December 27th to 31st in the second meeting in Madras, prepared in collaboration with the Bishops' Conference of India (Catholic) and the United Church of South India (Protestant), with several Orthodox Churches in the country participating as well. A first meeting was held three years ago. "The first meeting gave rise to numerous initiatives on the part of Indian Christian youth. It permitted many youth organizations to get to know one another better and to cooperate in a regular fashion," stated Bishop Abraham, the chairman of the youth commission. "That is why we asked the brothers of Taizé to help us renew an experience that had been so fruitful." "Relationships between Indian and other Asian parishes and parishes in the West have become stronger and stronger since the first meeting. Each tries to see what it can bring to the others," one of those who prepared the meeting remarked. "In this way the danger that the meetig be merely a flash in the pan is avoided." The preparation lasted for several months, especially in Madras itself and in its parishes, but also throughout the country.

BUILDING COMMUNION AND SOLIDARITY: Young Indians took two days to arrive by train from Delhi, Calcutta and faraway Kashmir, to share their experiences and find in the common prayer new strength for their commitments. Without the fifty percent discount offered by the government on railway tickets, young people from the countryside could never have come to Madras. For the Indians themselves, the meeting was an opportunity to discover the great diversity of languages and cultures in their land. Young adults from sixteen countries of Asia and Oceania, from eleven European countries, as well as some Americans and Africans took part in the meeting. Birgit came from Germany: "I had read in the Letter from Taizé that there would be a meeting in Madras and I decided to save money for the trip. I wanted to discover how young Christians in India are living out their faith in the midst of the problems of their country. In Germany, many people no longer believe I needed to find new reasons to hope. Before the meeting, I spent several days in a parish in Bombay whose members work with slum-dwellers. I learned how people build up communion and solidarity. When I return home, I would like to share my experience with those who are searching and to deal with the difficulties I have to live with in the same spirit as those I met." In a country where the Churches represent little more than 2% of the population (which still means sixteen million people!), such a gathering of Christians from around the world naturally took on a festive quality. The ecumenical make-up of the participants was a powerful sign in a country where there are not less than 300 Christian Churches! The Catholic archbishop and the Protestant bishop of Madras had both supported the preparations for the meeting. ▶

Benoit de la Fonchais

SIMPLICITY AND SUPERABUNDANCE OF HEART : Staying with families was one of the most powerful experiences for the participants, in Madras as well as in the towns and villages where some of them spent a few days. Seeing the families place everything they had at the disposition of their guests, how could people not be deeply touched by this sense of hospitality? In the different neighbourhoods of Madras, the groups not only prepared to welcome the participants; they also organized meetings in the evening, often of a festive character. In the morning, specially hired buses brought the participants to Loyola College, where the common prayer was held, followed by small-group meetings and a frugal meal: rice wrapped in banana leaves.

The centre of the meeting was a huge "pandal" set up for the common prayer. That is the name given in India to a shelter of bamboo and palm leaves build for important religious celebrations. This one was the size of a cathedral, an open-air cathedral. In fact, even in Madras where the tomb of the apostle Thomas is venerated, there was no church building large enough to hold everyone. Morning and evening, the crowd of young pilgrims gathered under the "pandal" sat on the ground and listened to Bible readings and sung Taizé litanies or "badjans" in Hindi or Tamil, the local language. Jean, from the Philippines, was certainly not the only one to leave Madras who was especially struck by the times of common prayer: "I especially liked the times of silence, inner and outer. They allow God to speak to the depth of our hearts, that voice which speaks of love, of understanding, of hope and of peace. And since the Gospel tells us that we speak of what our heart is full, there is nothing left for us to do but to share that love with others."

Not far from there is Pushpanagar, a district of great poverty. At the foot of the houses, many families live in straw huts. In the dusty alleys filled with children, emaciated cows are tethered in front of the huts and provide a little milk. A family of the district that had just moved rented their hut to the brothers of Taizé. From there, each morning Brother Roger left for the meeting in a "rickshaw", the name given to the motorized tricycles found all over the city. Ten or fifteen children crowded on to it as well and came with him to the prayer. Some days before the meeting, in the poverty of that hut, the celebration of Christmas night with the neighbours and with young people from the city was like Christmas in Bethlehem. ■

1989 Gandhi Prize

The names of those who received the Gandhi Prize this year were announced at the end of the Madras and Paris meetings. This prize, created three years ago in Madras, is awarded to persons, sometimes very hidden, who are bearers of trust in the human family. It does not include a gift of money.

- The Gandhi Prize for 1989 goes first to a woman of ARMENIA, Aghavni.She lost several members of her family in the earthquake of December 1988. On her hospital bed, she continued to communicate her trust in God to those still alive in the devastated region. She is the symbol of all the mothers of Armenia.

- In the second place, the Gandhi Prize was awarded to an entire family of CZECHOSLOVAKIA, the parents and their ten children. Their home is a place of incomparable hospitality. They know what it means to go to the very end out of faithfulness to Christ.

- Finally, the Gandhi Prize was given to a woman of INDIA, Lucy Singh.For more than twenty years she has been giving her life for the poorest of the poor. She lives in the slum of Pilkana in Calcutta. She is a witness of forgetting oneself for others.

Brother Roger at UNESCO:

(2 January 1989, in Paris, during the European meeting)

From Madras, I am bringing back a clear call to do everything possible to make the earth a place fit to live in for all.

In Europe, the end of the twentieth century has been marked by separations, mistrust, sometimes even suspicion. For many young Europeans, the result is disenchantment, scepticism and those feelings of "what's the use?" by which generous young people, seeing their hopes dashed, turn to merely individualistic undertakings. But we have eleven years before us, until the year 2000, to change things.

It depends in part upon the young if the whole European family is to leave behind the era of mistrust and enter a third millenium when it will be possible to build in trust and friendship with all. But for this, an incredible conversion of heart is required of us all.

As we continue our "pilgrimage of trust on earth", we want to enter into an era of comprehension and kindness, and to do this in very concrete ways.

A humble example of this is taking place these days between East and West. At Taizé, we were able to sign, in the name of the young, an accord to have a million New Testaments printed in the Russian language. At the end of February, these New Testaments will begin to be sent from France to be given to the Christians of Russia.

A more ambitious example of this, between the Northern and Southern continents. Your generation could be the one to see all the slums disappear from the earth, so that each person could have a home fit to live in. To achieve this, material sharing is not enough; a sharing of cultures and knowledge between peoples is essential, the sharing of scientific information which will enable all the resources of the new technologies to be used. And here, UNESCO has an irreplaceable role to play in keeping up our courage.

In closing, I want to commit myself, in the presence of all the young people gathered in the four churches, to go, with five children from five continents, to all the European capitals, from Moscow to Rome, from Madrid to Warsaw, to meet if possible with the leader of the country and ask him or her, in your name, to do everything possible, with you, the young, to speed up the construction of the great European family.

Then, the next step will be to go, also with five children, to other continents with the same intention. Beauty ancient and forever young: for the coming eleven years, God will entrust each of us with a daring step to take, and we shall be able to carry it through to the end. □

Johannine hours

John 15.9-12

The word "commandment" hurts the ears of many today. It is too suggestive of the military where orders must be followed blindly, with no discussion or reflection. We may be surprised to find it on the lips of Jesus and, still more, to see it linked to love: "If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, as I have kept the Father's commandments and remain in his love" (John 15,10; cf. 14,13-21).

In the Biblical languages, commandment has an original meaning that differs from the simple outward observance of juridicial rules. Sometimes, Saint John uses the term "word" in places where, in a similar context, he had used "commandment". "Whoever loves me will keep my word" (John 14,23). Jesus' commandment is the word he uttered with matchless freedom; it is his entire Gospel, his teaching that astonished all who heard it, opening for them a world whose existence they had never even imagined. We have only to read the Gospel to discover its content: "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (John 15,12). Keeping his commandment means opening ourselves to this project of love, making it that which gives new energy to our daily existences and drawing from it all the resources necessary to translate it into the reality of our lives. From one person to another, from one situation to another—so many possibilities! And so we realize that, if we are to "keep the commandment", our imagination and intelligence are required and brought into play.

Jesus insists upon this commandment of brotherly love; it is his own (John 15,12). It will be characteristic of him (John 13,34-35). But when we put it into practice, we do much more than to give life to an institution that is twenty centuries old. Christ—the living Christ and not a memory—remains in those who keep his commandment. In this way, life becomes a creation with him. What better image could we find to describe this mutual and life-giving indwelling that the one used by Saint John: "I am the vine and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, bears much fruit" (John 15,5).

Question: Does the Gospel stimulate me to create?

Meditating on the Word

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 Mon — 1 K 17.7-16 / Jn 7.14-18
Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. **Jm 5.13-16**

2 Tue — 1 K 17.17-24 / Jn 7. 25-30
Persevere in prayer, being watchful and thankful. **Col 4.2-6**

3 Wed — 1 K 19.3-8 / Jn 7. 31-33
Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you have all been called to one hope. **Ep 4.1-6**

4 Thu — Ac 1.1-11 / Ep 1.17-23
ASCENSION
The Risen Christ said to the apostles: This is what is written: The Christ will suffer, and rise from the dead on the third day. And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations. **Lk 24.46-53**

5 Fri — 1 K 19.9-13a / Ac 1.12-14
Jesus cried out: Let anyone who is thirsty come to me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink! **Jn 7.37-39**

6 Sat — 2 K 2.1,6-13 / Col 3.1-4
A third time, Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you." **Jn 21.15-19**

7 SUN — Ac 7.55-60 / Rv 22.12-20
Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying: Father, may they all be one, just as you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also be in us and that the world may believe that you sent me. **Jn 17.20-26**

8 Mon — Dn 6.26-28 / **Jn 15.1-5**
God's people is being prepared for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself. Ep 4.7-13

9 Tue — Ep 4.14-16 / Jn 15.7-9
Daniel said: In a vision I saw one like a son of man, to whom were given authority, glory and sovereign power, and all the nations and peoples of every tongue worshipped him. His kingdom is everlasting, it will never pass away. **Dn 7.9,13-14**

10 Wed — Dn 7. 27-28 / Ep 4.22-25
Jesus said: This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. **Jn 15.9-12**

11 Thu — Ep 4.32-5.3 / **Jn 15.13-17**
Daniel prayed saying: Listen to the prayer of your servant. For we rely not on our good deeds but on your great mercy. Dn 9.17-19

12 Fri — Jn 15.18-21 / **Ep 5.8-14**
I will ponder your precepts and fix my gaze on your paths. I find my delight in your will. Ps 119.14-16

13 Sat — Ps 119.33-37 / **Jn 15.26-27**
Let yourselves be filled by the Spirit. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Ep 5.18b-20

14 SUN — Rm 8.14-17 / **Ac 2.1-11**
PENTECOST
The Risen Christ breathed upon his disciples and said: Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. Jn 20.19-23

15 Mon — Nb 11.24-29 / Ac 2.12-21
Jesus said: Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me. **Jn 14.1-3**

16 Tue — Jn 14.4-10a / **Ac 2.36-41**
The Lord says: Be not afraid, my servant, you whom I have chosen. For I shall pour out water on the thirsty land and streams on the dry ground; I shall pour out my Spirit upon you. Is 44.1-3

17 Wed — Is 59.21 / Jn 14.10b-14
All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but they shared everything they had. **Ac 4.32-35**

18 Thu — 1 Co 2. 9-10a / Jn 14.15-19
The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people. **Jr 31.31-34**

19 Fri — Ezk 37. 11-14 / **Jn 14. 23-26**
Paul writes: Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you and whom you received from God. 1 Co 6. 19-20

20 Sat — 1 Co 12.13 / **Jn 14. 27-29**
The Lord says: I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Jl 3. 1-5

May

21 SUN — Pr 8.22-31 / **Jn 16.12-15**
Our hope will not let us down, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. Rm 5.1-5

22 Mon — Ex 3.1-6 / Ga 1.6-7,10-12
Jesus said: Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. **Mt 4.12-17**

23 Tue — Ex 3.7-12 / Ga 2.16
Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him. **Mt 4.18-22**

24 Wed — Ex 3.13-14 / Mt 4.23-25
Paul writes: It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. **Ga 2.19-21**

25 Thu — Ex 6.5-9 / Mt 5.1-12
Is not the bread which we break, communion in the body of Christ? Because there is only one bread, we, who are many are one body. **1 Co 10.16-17**

26 Fri — Ex 13. 17-18,21-22 / Ga 3.23-29
Jesus said to his disciples: You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. **Mt 5. 14-16**

27 Sat — Ga 4.1-7 / **Mt 5.20,23-24**
Moses said to the people: Do not be afraid! Stand firm and you will see what God will do to save you today. Ex 14.11-14

28 SUN — Gn 14.18-20 / **Lk 9.11-17**
Paul writes: I received from the Lord what I passed on to you. Whenever you eat the bread and drink the cup of the Lord, you are proclaiming his death until he comes. 1 Co 11.23-26

29 Mon — Ex 15.1-13 / Ga 5.1,6-10a
Jesus said: Give to anyone who asks you, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away. Mt 5.38-42

30 Tue — Ex 16.2-36 / **Mt 5.43-48**
You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom for self- indulgence but to serve one another in love. Ga 5.13-16

31 Wed — Ex 19.3-6a / Ga 5.22-25
Jesus said: When you give, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your generosity is secret. And your Father, who sees all that is done in secret, will reward you. Mt 6.1-4

Meditating on the Word

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day (if possible, two days in the same week) take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

June

1 Thu — Mt 6.7-15, Ga 6.1-2
The Lord says to his people: Do not mistreat or oppress the strangers in your midst, for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt. **Ex 22.20-21**

2 Fri — Ex 33.11-14,17, Mt 6.16-18
The one who sows in the Spirit, will from the Spirit reap eternal life. **Ga 6.7-10**

3 Sat — Ex 40.36-38, Ga 6.14-18
Jesus said: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too. **Mt 6.19-21**

4 SUN — 1 K 8.41-43, Ga 1.1-10
A centurion said to Jesus: Say the word, and my servant will be healed. **Lk 7.1-10**

5 Mon — Lv 19.1-2, 1 Tm 1.12-16
Jesus said: Do not worry about your life. Seek first God's kingdom and his saving justice. **Mt 6.25-34**

6 Tue — Lv 19.15-18, **Mt 7.1-5**
God wants all people to be saved and to reach full knowledge of the truth. 1 Tm 2.1-4

7 Wed — Lv 19.33-34, 1 Tm 2.5-8
Jesus said: Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. **Mt 7.7-12**

8 Thu — 1 Tm 3.14-16, Mt 7.21,24-29
God says to his people: I shall fix my home among you and never reject you. I shall be your God and you will be my people. **Lv 26.11-13**

9 Fri — Nb 6.22-26, Mt 8.1-4
Paul writes: The point of all our toiling and battling is that we have put our trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all people. **1 Tm 4.8-11**

10 Sat — Nb 11.24-29, Mt 8.5-10
Paul writes to Timothy: You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you. Do not neglect it. **1 Tm 4.12-16**

11 SUN — 1 K 17.17-24, Ga 1.11-19
The people said of Jesus, "A great prophet has risen up among us; God has visited his people." **Lk 7.11-17**

12 Mon — Nb 12.4-8, 1 Tm 6.6-10
Jesus healed all the sick, fulfilling what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: He bore our sicknesses away and carried our diseases. **Mt 8.16-20**

13 Tue — Nb 23.7-12, Mt 9.1-8
Paul writes to Timothy: Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called. **1 Tm 6.11-12**

14 Wed — 1 Tm 6.13-16, Mt 9.9-13
You will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you search for him with all your heart and all your soul. **Dt 4.12,29-31**

15 Thu — 1 Tm 6.17-21, Mt 9.14-17
The Lord your God is a merciful God who will not forsake you. **Dt 4. 33,37-39**

16 Fri — Dt 7.7-9, 2 Tm 1.1-5
Jesus said to a woman he had healed: Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you. **Mt 9.18-26**

17 Sat — Dt 8.2,12-14, 2 Tm 1.6-9a
Jesus said to his disciples: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest. **Mt 9.35-38**

18 SUN — 2 S 12.7-10,13, **Lk 7.36-8.3**
Paul writes: The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Ga 2.16-21

19 Mon — Dt 10.12-13,17-19, Jn 8.1-11
We have been given God's grace in Christ Jesus. He has abolished death and brought to light the life that cannot be destroyed, through the Gospel. **2 Tm 1. 9b-12**

20 Tue — 2 Tm 1.13-14, **Jn 8.12**
Be openhanded towards your neighbour and towards the poor and needy in your land. Dt 15.7-8,10-11

21 Wed — 2 Tm 2.1-7, Jn 8.13-19
The Word is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart for you to put it into practice. **Dt 30.11-14**

22 Thu — Dt 30.19-20a, 2 Tm 2.8-13
Jesus said: I do nothing of myself, but I say what the Father has taught me, and the one who sent me is with me. **Jn 8.26b-30**

23 Fri — Dt 31.6-8, 2 Tm 2.22b-24
Jesus said: If you make my word your home, you will indeed be my disciples. You will come to know the truth and the truth will set you free. **Jn 8.31-36**

24 Sat — Ml 3.23-24a, Ac 13.22-26
St JOHN THE BAPTIST
Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, prophesied: You, little child, will be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare a way for him. **Lk 1.57-80**

25 SUN — Zc 12.10-11;13.1, Ga 3.26-29
Jesus said: Whoever wants to be a follower of mine must renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **Lk 9.18-24**

26 Mon — Jn 9.1-9, 2 Tm 4.6-8
God finds his people in the desert, in a barren wasteland. He shields them and cares for them, he guards them as the apple of his eye. **Dt 32.10-12**

27 Tue — 2 Tm 4.16-18, Jn 9.24-38
Isaiah said: Prepare a way through the desert for the Lord. Make a straight road for our God. **Is 40.1-5**

28 Wed — Is 40.6-8, Tt 2.11-14
Jesus said: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full. **Jn 10.1-10**

29 Thu — Ac 12.1-11, 2 Co 4.13-14
SS PETER AND PAUL
Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." **Mt 16.13-19**

30 Fri — Is 40.25-28, Jn 10.16-21
Paul writes: May our fellowship in faith lead you to full knowledge of all the good we can accomplish for Christ. **Phm 4-6**

Johannine hours

Ps 119,16

In many ways, throughout our life, questions arise: what am I doing here on earth? Who am I? Using a different language, some formulate the question by relating their life to God: what is the will of God for me?

The expression "the will of God" can be misleading if we forget that every human being is already an expression of the will of God. What is unique, beautiful and absolutely original in a being comes from Christ "by whom everything was made". Living according to God's will does not mean emptying myself of myself; it means becoming what I am in my heart of hearts. The will of God is not superimposed upon a human existence to bend it in a direction contrary to its own inclinations. It coincides with the secret of each life.

But everyone knows it is not easy to answer the question "who am I?" So many things claim, wrongly, to fill the human heart. So many disappointments leave a bitter taste. Aware that we are a mystery for ourselves, some Christians of the first centuries compared the Word of God to a mirror in which our true identity is reflected. "Come and you will see," Christ tells us. In him, the living Word of God unveils the mystery of our humanity.

Looking to Christ and letting Christ look at them, some discovered an identity they were unaware of: "You are Simon, son of John; you will be called Cephas" (John 1,42). How many people who make up what the Letter to the Hebrews calls "a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12,1) found themselves one day on a road they never could have imagined for themselves? A road that seemed to be blocked by limitations, blindnesses and impossibilities was opened up by Christ.

On a deeper level, as for Jesus, our true identity is revealed to us by Another, or, to say it with the words of the Gospel, by "a voice" that comes, not from ourselves, but "from heaven": "You are my Son whom I love" (Mark 1,11).

Question: What words of Christ help me to discover who I am and what God expects of me?

YOUTH EUROPEAN EAST-WEST MEETING

28 April - 1 May 1989

PÉCS IN HUNGARY

Until the meeting in Rome at the end of 1987, few contacts were possible with Hungarians. Since then, they have shown their depth and their vitality to the other Europeans. In Paris, they were happy for once to be able to invite others to come and visit them, to take part in the European meeting in Pécs which will be a new step in the pilgrimage of trust on earth. Young people from throughout Europe will have an opportunity to share in the life of the Church in Hungary. Participants will be welcomed in families and parishes, with common prayers held in the centre of Pécs, meetings in different neighbourhoods and groups of reflection.

How can we support one another in a common search throughout Europe? How can we be more attentive to the questions that are most urgent? How can we discover and share initiatives that are sources of hope for all?

To begin this discovery of the life of the Church in Hungary, here are some excerpts from a letter received from Budapest:

"One day, in a dream, Saint Paul saw a Macedonian who asked him to come and help his people. The Church in Hungary can feel it is in the same situation. It happens more and more often that people turn to religion, and in particular to Christianity. They are looking for answers to their questions, a guide for their life. This is true in particular for the young: they are looking for meaning in their life, a harmonious community, an existence that is coherent, materially and spiritually.

"Today the Church has to respond to expectations that are growing;it is even regarded with respect. There are different reasons for this. Some, out of curiosity, feel attracted to this unknown community, rich in values. Others see in it a victim of the fifties,and so they are sympathetic. More and more, the Church is viewed as offering a solid base for human freedoms.

"One must recognize, however, that there is still a lot to be done to become open. For example, our Church has little missionary zeal. The spiritual needs of those who come are taken care of, but very few feel a sense of responsibility for the mission of the Church. Those in charge of a parish are not only responsible for the spiritual and bodily health of the believers but also for all those who live in that territory. Christ called them to share the news of God's love with all people so that, together with the whole community of believers, they might be a sign in their local situation. For example, by serving the poor and forgotten out of love for Christ, or by speaking out to ask for integrity in public life or to defend basic human values.

"Moreover, religious life has been limited to personal life. For a long time, the Christian faith could only be practiced in the home, in secret; it became more intimate and deep-seated. But Christians do not appear in public life; they do not like publicity. For this reason Christian values and morality cannot really enrich the life of our society in its search for ways out of its crises.

"In some villages, an integral Christian life can still be found, but it has apparently not changed for the last thirty years. In the cities, among the young Christians, schoolchildren, students and young intellectuals are primarily the ones who have experienced a conciliar Church and who are avid for something new. They want to live in a different way than past generations. Among them, there are many who have not grown up in a Christian environment, but who consciously chose to join the Church. They want a spiritual life that is more personal, a prayer that is more regular; they practice meditation and take part willingly in retreats and pilgrimages. They are intellectuals and want to be so, and their spiritual journey can be expressed in this way: they want to become familiar with Christianity, to «know» it in order to know on what their faith is based. They have a deep desire for community life: they often spend their days with friends discussing ideas. But some of them, happy to be together, close themselves up in a ghetto, far from the noise of the world; they support each other instead of serving the world.

"And yet, many of them have commitments that go beyond mere words, that involves a real openness to others. They are active in different social programs, in Church communities, in parishes; they are happy to work to help the unfortunate, ready to assist the poor and people with problems. They are not numerous, representing only a small portion of all young people. But their importance is great in Hungarian society. The conciliar renewal of the Church is unimaginable without their presence, their assistance and their activities. The nation, too, cannot do without them, because they belong to the most disinterested, serious and human social stratum. Without them it will be almost impossible to build a more authentic Hungary." □

Dates: Arrival Friday 28 April in the evening before 10pm or Saturday 29 April in the morning between 7 and 10am. Departure Monday 1 May before noon.

Age: 18-30 years

Programme: Welcome in families and parishes of Pécs and the region. Common prayers in churches in the centre of Pécs, meetings in the parishes and workshops for reflection on different topics.

Accommodations will be simple: bring air mattress and sleeping bag. Lodging in families and parishes fosters greater sharing.

Visa: To enter Hungary, each participant must have a valid passport with a short-term visa for Hungary.

Families and handicapped persons should telephone the welcome in Taizé to be sure of an adequate accommodation.

Sharing in the costs: count on spending, once there, about 150 French francs.

Deadline for registration: 30 March.

Travel: Those who want to organize group travel should contact Taizé as soon as possible.

Registration Form

to be sent before 30 March to: European Meeting in Pécs, 71250 Taizé Community, France
(Tel. 85.50.18.18 for information and registration from 9.30am to noon and from 4.30pm to 6.30pm)

FIRST NAME :

FAMILY NAME :

ADDRESS :

(with post code and country)

Telephone : ...../..... Occupation : ..... Age : .....

Circle the "yes" or "no" or complete where necessary:

- I will come with a group from the town of ..... (ville)
  led by .....
- For adults (over 30 years) and those who cannot sleep on the floor: I need a bed yes / no

If "yes", say whether you are (please circle):

woman man couple family with ..... children disabled person with helper

- I will arrive at Pécs on 28th April: yes / no
- I will arrive at Pécs on 29th April: yes / no
- I would like ..... more registration forms (photocopy your own if possible)

Listening to the CONTINENTS

Hong Kong

A group of young Chinese from Hong Kong writes:

"Last autumn, forty-two of us who had been to Taizé or who had been in contact with the community met. We met to share our reflections, our experiences and to be confirmed in our mission as members of this "bridge Church" that is the Church of Hong Kong.

Our sharing was marked by a deep faith in the concrete presence of Jesus, symbolized in a striking manner by his presence on the banks of the Jordan, where everyone could meet him face to face. It is a presence that fosters unity, in all the meanings of the word. Several of us were deeply enriched by this sharing, strengthened inwardly in their life and their faith.

NEXT SUMMER: YOUNG CHINESE IN TAIZÉ

Some of us from Hong Kong will go to Taizé next summer. They will be accompanied by several young people from mainland China. We are very glad of this. We are impatient to have this inexplicable faith experience. It will be a particularly precious gift at this moment of our life and our history.

In Hong Kong we are in need of courage and hope. We have had the experience of sharing our faith, and so we can kindle a kind of beacon of hope where we live and we want to continue to propagate this hope. We count on your prayer. Keep our trip to Taizé in your prayers and pray for Hong Kong and its future." ■

Italy

"In a small town in northern Italy, we wanted to welcome someone from another continent. Our proposition went unheeded until a group from Poland stayed with us for a night on their return from the European meeting in Rome. That experience of welcome convinced those who were hesitant.

"Our town has particularly close ties to India because a missionary lived there for forty years and another one took his place. So we asked to receive two Indians, since a nearby town also wanted to be part of the project. We explained our idea to the different parish groups and asked for their support.

A lottery was organized, the different groups looked for ways of sharing the costs, and even the children learning catechism offered their savings. The evening of the drawing, we explained once again the meaning of this undertaking and the significance for Christians of offering hospitality.

As a result of this preparation, when the time for the visit came, there was no problem in organizing the program for the ten days, and even if three girls arrived instead of two, we were able to find families for them to stay in right away. Throughout their stay, many visits were made, often with children as well as with the other groups.

After the introductions, they were asked all kinds of questions about all the aspects of their life, until one of the questions led to a deeper exchange because it touched their own commitment. The three Indian girls also knew how to ask questions which helped us reflect on our situation!

This experience has had many consequences. First of all, it gave us an opportunity for greater collaboration between the different parish groups. For our own group, it was also a renewing and a strengthening of our fellowship.

Many families took part in the welcome, even if only for a meal, and this simple, warm welcome changed the relationships between us.

Finally, the presence of three Indians in the town touched many people who were not churchgoers and who came to speak with them, sometimes only out of curiosity. For our parish, it was a discovery that belonging to the Church opened us to the whole wide world.

Now our desire is that this whole experience of hospitality and openness that our group and town has had may continue with those who live alongside us, with those we meet every day. We also hope that many others can have an experience like ours." ■

An appeal to all

Everyone can contribute to send **one million New Testaments to Russia**

At the end of November, Patriarch Pimen of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, sent the following telegramme to Taizé: "We accept with gratitude the gift of New Testaments which you proposed on the occasion of the millenium celebrations of the Russian Orthodox Church." In June, Brother Roger was invited to attend the one thousand year celebrations and he offered to look for ways to have one million New Testaments printed in Russian.

One million paperback copies of the New Testament have therefore been printed in France, in the Russian Millenium Version. Each copy costs 25p GB or 30p IRL or 45 cents US or 50 cents Canadian. These New Testaments will be distributed free of charge to Russian Christians. They are being sent to Russia beginning in late February.

Contributions can be sent to:
UK: "Operation Hope", Bank Account no. 44495090, Coutts and Co., Duncannon Branch, 440 Strand, LONDON WC2R 0QS. œ USA: "Operation Hope", c/o Taizé, 413 W. 48th St., New York NY 10036. œ IRELAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, SOUTH AFRICA, etc.: gifts can be sent in the same way as sums for subscriptions to the Letter from Taizé, making sure to indicate with your payment "for Operation Hope".

Letter from Taizé

Annual subscription

Ordinary subscription:
France 25 FF
Other countries 35 FF
Supporting subscription: 50 or 100 FF
Airmail subscription: (outside Europe only) 45 FF

means of payment:

◦ by credit card (Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleue): send to Taizé the number of your card, its date of validity, and say what sum *in French Francs* you wish to transfer.

◦ by international Giro transfer, *in French Francs*, addressed to: Lettre de Taizé, CCP 20041-01007 0061446M038-71 or CCP LYON 614 46 M.

◦ by cheque *in French Francs* to "Lettre de Taizé, 7125 CLUNY" made payable through "Société Générale" (Eurocheques *in French Francs* accepted).

◦ In West Germany, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, India, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA it is possible to pay the subscription within the country. Write to Taizé to ask for the address in your country.

Correspondence:
Letter from Taizé, 71250 Taizé-Communauté, France

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